

THE LANTERN

By Alice Brown

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. C. YOHNS



MARSHALL BRUCE and his wife, Janie, lived in a flat ingeniously contrived to be hot in summer and, by a defective system of heating, very cold in winter. They had perched there for three years during the weaving of their fortunes, sometimes hilariously intent on the uncouth advantages of the place, overlooking, as it did, a corner of life far removed from their own, except in anxious work and vagueness in regard to the next month's rent. That was like having an uncomfortable seat at a dreary realistic play. Or again when the fount of hope got choked and ceased temporarily to bubble, they recoiled from the tawdriness of it all, and wondered whether it would not have been better for Marshall to keep his professional post in the little academy, and for Janie to go on teaching literature under him, rather than to vault the cruel barbed wire into journalism, there to throw and be overthrown.

On this July evening, the flat was feeling the heat. Janie sat in the kitchen commanding the court where her neighbors had settled themselves for prolonged hours of unreserved revel, challenging their own jaded inner forces to counteract the atmospheric enemy without. They laughed loudly at intervals, in momentary uplift when some one of them, Janie knew through previous observation, made a foray upon a neighboring drug store, and returned with dishes of ice cream the mind shuddered to contemplate. She knew exactly how they looked, the men coatless, the women slatternly in *lingerie* waists profusely trellised with a "letting-in" of cheap lace, and the children, innocent of the dictum that boys and girls should be in retreat by the time it is dark under the table, alternating the wail of fretfulness with the shriek of an unlovely mirth. This was not one of the times when Janie could regard them all joyously as a picture of life, or warmly as a part of the great family wherein they seemed to be

workers of a degree only less humble than her own. She was affronted by the city summer, tired of prolonged care, and she could but think of a circle in an ingeniously contrived inferno where lost spirits suffered not only the torture of their own habitat but that of the outcry from the one below. In a street not far away a talking machine started on its interminable jargon, chiming in terrifying commentary with her own mental lamentations. She would not have been surprised if the talking machine had broken suddenly into Brocken cries.

Proofs of a modest story long ago paid for and the proceeds eaten up, lay on the table before her, ready to be stamped and mailed, and she knew Marshall, in the front room, was poring over the last of his masterly series, a more exacting task, and therefore to be carried on in the fractionally less torrid portion of the house. Janie always insisted that she preferred the kitchen for her work because it seemed more secluded, and Marshall innocently agreed. He had not even known how she had held her breath and guarded him through the year when he was getting his material for this set of magazine articles on Elisha Porson, the bogey of all commercial circles, execrated by thousands who had served him and then gone under when they attempted to seek out the sources of the golden flood for which they dug the channel. There was to be no overflow, they found. The drops were all to run swiftly to one hoard. So the articles, now appearing, had proved. They were in effect an attack on Porson, his methods and his personal integrity, and through him, an onslaught upon modern business.

Marshall, when he had been asked to ride forth for the slaying of Porson, had felt a high commercial triumph of his own, and with that the righteous valor of the knight-errant. Janie had known he was the man commissioned to do a big deed. That first flame of eagerness had lighted her through three-quarters of the task. What Marshall felt about it now, what im-

mediate force was hurrying him, she did not know. Of one thing she was sure: he thought with her of the tangible reward if the articles ultimately "made good." For they were lifting an obscure magazine to an amazing circulation, and the publishers were just men. They would double and treble what he had been promised in advance, and that would mean a move from the flat overlooking the court, even a month in England benignly beckoning them, and, most of all, more work. But of these palliations to the task Janie was not thinking to-night as she leaned back in her chair, one arm lying along the table, her fingers holding the pen. She was thinking of life itself, the web embroidered by figures, Porson and these uncouth creatures in the court, though it looked less to her like a fabric than it sometimes did, a fabric stirred by a battling wind so that the figures themselves moved purposely. It was in some manner alive, though formless, a savage power bent on ruin.

Marshall, in the other room, pushed back his chair, and she came to herself with an instant call upon her every-day look of watchful sympathy. She was on guard, ready to do him service from filling his pen or pipe to speeding off on desperate foraging flights for the material he might suddenly lack. She heard his slippers feet along the corridor, and then saw him before her, strong, flushed, splendid to her gaze with the distinctions she loved in him: the kind gray eyes set wide apart, the warm hair tumbling over his forehead and his comprehensive look of youth and power. Tired as he was, he looked for the moment instinct with triumph.

"Well," said he, "it's done."

"Done!" The echo was not interrogative. It seemed rather a wondering comment on such a fact.

He began a tattoo on the oven of the gas stove, and she noted idly how fine his hand was, used to athletic tasks and fitted to hold the pen.

"They'll set it up at once," she said languidly.

"Yes. I shall have the proof this week. Then we've done with Porson—done with him, done with him. *Vale*, Elisha Porson! Avaunt! Get out! You have served your turn. The tale of your iniquities is complete, and it now remains for you to get the

monopoly of sackcloth and ashes, and we will hie us from your crumbling ruins to other jobs." He was fantastically gesticulating over the sink where, in a moment, he proposed to let the water run through the filter preparatory to a cooling draught, when he turned to her for a responsive glance. He noted her pallor, the dark circles on her cheek, and sprang to her with dismay. "Why, old girl," said he, "you're done up."

Tears were squeezing themselves out under her dropped eyelids.

"Yes," she said, "I've known myself to be rugged. Don't hug me here, Marsh. The court'll see us. There! I told you. Hear them yell. Come off into the den, and we can talk."

His arm about her they did go, and in the den, littered still with his cast-off manuscript, he turned the light up to see if she really looked as alarmingly bad as he feared. She was on the sofa now, her head thrown back against her lifted arms. He took his own chair and watched her, a frown between his anxious eyes. In a minute she laughed.

"I'll tell you what it is, Marsh," she said. "It's Porson. This is his revenge."

"You've got too tired over him. You've let down, now the race is over. Take it as I do. Don't say, what a devil of a time we've had with him. Say, we've done with him."

"I feel as if we never should be done with him." She opened her eyes heavily for a moment, and closed them again because they had fallen on his completed work. Something had to remind her at every turn of Elisha Porson, the adversary of mankind as she had grown to think him, and so her adversary also. But with her husband's anxious eyes upon her she was bound to help him. "Don't you find yourself crushed by all this investigation, Marsh?" she asked. "Somehow sapped—depleted?"

He was frowning at the effort to understand.

"No," he said at once. "I feel as a lawyer does after he's won a nasty case. He hasn't enjoyed the evidence, but it means to an end. It buys conviction. It serves justice. And for him it spells triumph."

"I can't think of the triumph just this minute. I'm certain we've learned things we wish we hadn't known."

"Nonsense! The things are. If they exist, why not know them?"

"It seems as if what we call business is a fight—a terrible fight, too terrible to look on at."

"It is." The man's confirming dictum came quick and sharp on the heels of her wavering commentary.

"I feel as if money were evil."

"So the preacher says," Marshall echoed gayly, "the root of all evil—or is it the love of it? I bet we could use a pocketful of it, allee samee."

"Do you know what Porson has made me see?"

"He's made me see a number of things. One is, that he'll be the better for a taste of brimstone. I could wish he'd had it years ago."

"He's made the world hideous."

"Oh, come, Janie! not the world."

"Yes, the world, because it wants to get on. And we shall be just like him the minute we begin to fight for money to lift us above other people—well, the people out there." She did not need to indicate the court, even with a glance. The discord of acclamation was floating toward them through the flat, and both of them thought absently that it was hailing a new consignment of ice-cream. "I'm convinced that Porson hasn't one decent humane impulse left."

"Well, if he has, I've failed to spot it. However, let's be charitable. Let's say he never had any to begin with."

"He can't have been a monster. Remember, he supported his mother——"

"From that date," Marshall quoted rhetorically, "'the date of his obtaining a position in the shoe-store, his mother ceased sewing for a living, and young Elisha supported her in a modest way, always bettering with his rising fortunes.'"

"That's it," said Janie. "He was human to start with, but now he's made himself into a machine. It goes whirling over the green grass of the world, cutting off heads."

"Can't put that in," said Marshall, who had cocked his head with an air of listening toward business ends. "Too flowery!"

"And the worst of it is, he's made me see he's not an exception. He's only noteworthy because he's got more brain than the others—more of that hideous power of

tending money and making it breed. The men that fought him—they're the same kind, only they didn't win."

"The fierce light that beats upon a financier," remarked Marshall.

But she was moving him. He might stave her off, yet he, too, felt a decent recoil after the bad company they had been keeping. He, too, was morally jaded, though he would not own it. He, as became a man, was taking "the world but as the world," and yet his longings clove to the green hills of peace. His homesick eyes could not discern them in the distance. The world seemed suddenly turned into a great industrial battlefield where homely virtues were trodden out under the foot of the mercenaries hired to fight for some Napoleon no more greedy than they, but more masterful.

"We've got our punishment for meddling with him," said Janie bitterly. "We've painted a portrait, and the picture's going to stay with us. It's hanging right here on our wall. You see it. I see it. The eyes follow us, even when we aren't looking at it."

"Don't," said Marshall involuntarily.

"Oh, it's a true portrait. I own that. We've caught the exact likeness—of a man who isn't a man any more. He's a horribly intelligent force. He can make me believe all the other men that copy him and fight him are hideous forces, too. We shall be, Marsh, if we try to keep on our feet in this awful scramble and rush. Why, I don't dare to wish we could go to Europe or even move out of here, because it means fighting for money——"

The bell in the hall rang with a jarring dissonance. Janie started to her feet, and Marshall threw down his paper knife and went to the tube.

"Yes," she heard him say. "Who is it? Come up. Four flights."

Almost immediately he had returned to her and arrested her flight to the dark back parlor where, remembering her disarray, she was betaking herself. His face itself stopped her. It was blazing, with what emotion she could not yet tell, wonder, perhaps bitterness, an ironic gayety. His hand was heavy on her wrist.

"Who do you think it is?" he asked rapidly.

She shook her head.

"Porson himself."

"Elisha Porson?"

He nodded, the sparkling commentary of his face intensifying.

"The fool!" he breathed.

Slow, rather cautious steps were nearing on the stairs.

"What have I told you about the cleverest of men? Take them out of their own grooves and they go to pieces. He knows leather, he knows the market; but here he is walking straight into my mouth to lie down in it."

"What does he want, Marsh?" she whispered. All her own acumen had deserted her. She asked the question as simply as a child.

"Want?" Marshall repeated savagely. A terrible anticipatory triumph was in his look. "He's read the first number, perhaps the second, and he wants to buy me off—the fool!"

The steps halted at the door. Janie fled into the back room and sank on a chair. She was effectually awakened, as if by a piercing call from some emergency. It was reasonable to her, as to her husband, that Porson should want to bribe them, and even that he should innocently try it. She saw her husband with the hoard of gold laid open before him, and knew proudly he would refuse to look.

Marshall threw open the door.

"Come in, Mr. Porson," she heard him say.

Then the door closed and the varying steps, Porson's shuffling slightly as those of an old man not very painstakingly shod, and her husband's decisive, as if all his youth and scorn of paltering found expression there, came in together.

"Sit here," said Marshall, again abruptly, and took his own place at the desk.

The gas, whether by Marshall's intention or not shone full on Porson's face, and Janie, bending forward there in the dark, trembled at it, seeing it with an added significance in the light of her own home. She had studied his portrait in its various stages of development, the boy in the daguerreotype, with the inconsequent mouth and smooth hair, the youth beginning to show the peering shrewdness of his later years as he realized where accumulation might place him, the middle-aged man with the mean lines of greed and the rigor-

ous ones of mastery about his eyes and mouth, and the man himself as he footed it down town in the morning, his only walk for the day before his task of incubating the eggs of riches and fighting off the others who would steal his nest. She and Marshall had worked so long over that composite portrait that Porson's features had acquired for them an exaggerated significance, and now that he had walked into their very presence, her heart beat hard at the thought that, despite hospitable honor, they might enrich the image by one line more. He laid his battered hat on the table, the tile that figured invariably in the caricatures of him, and passed a knotted hand wearily through his thin hair with the gesture fitted to locks that had begun by being thick. He started a little, and lifted his head alertly.

"Who's in there?" he asked, pointing a thumb at the back room.

"My wife," said Marshall, at once.

"I prefer to see you alone," Porson announced, with the air of one who is accustomed to getting what he asks for. It was not the full, noble note of command. His high querulous voice would never compass that. It bespoke rather the habit of a dominance necessary and tedious.

At once Janie, from no considered impulse except as the result of the directness of her own nature, bent always on the straightest path, rose and came forward into the circle of light. Marshall got up and with a somewhat accented courtesy to mark his tenderness for her and insure her against rebuff, drew forward a chair. She stood still in the illuminated radius, a small figure, her pale golden hair drooping about her childlike face, and looked at Porson, half with an inevitable aversion and half appealingly because she wanted very much to stay. Porson regarded her for a moment, not, Marshall angrily noted, as if he saw her distinctive charm, but as if she were a figure in the path. He got up then, as if by an afterthought, not grudgingly, but because he seemed to be remembering that rising to greet a woman was a custom mysteriously decreed, and one that, leading to unknown ends, he might not neglect.

"How do you do?" he conceded, in his rasping voice. But he looked at Marshall immediately with the unaltered requirement that the figure should be removed.

"My wife is my literary partner," said



"I'll tell you what it is, Marsh," she said. "It's Porson. This is his revenge."—Page 178.

Marshall, answering the glance. "She helps me collect my material and pronounces on the stuff. It's as much her work as mine."

Janie, who knew him so well, read in his air, rather than his voice, the uneasiness of thinking it would be incalculable disappointment if Porson should refuse the gauge thrown down and say he would not speak at all. She took the matter into her own hands.

"I'll go out, Marshall," she said quickly. "Mr. Porson won't mind my being in the next room, even if I do hear. Our flat is so tiny," she explained to the visitor, with an unwilling smile—it came before she had time to think how she hated Porson—"we hear from one end of it to the other."

At that Porson turned his small eyes on her and seemed, for purposes of his own, to estimate and accept her.

"Well! well!" he said, with an impatient

movement of the hands. "Well! well! But"—he raised the discordant voice a little—"this interview is confidential."

"Certainly," said Janie, with dignity. "That is understood."

She withdrew again into her solitude of the back room and sat there in a palpitating intentness.

"I don't know," Marshall was saying obstinately. "I don't know whether it's confidential. It depends on the sort of thing you've got to say."

Porson stopped him by another of those rather uncertain gestures of the hands that, wavering as they were, certainly had the effect of power. He leaned forward in his chair now and let the dramatic hands drop between his knees, while he reflected.

"You—" he began slowly, "you've printed two numbers."

"Yes," said Marshall.

There was an ugly frown between his

brows. Janie, seeing it spring there and knit itself, thrilled with admiration of him and eagerness of sympathy with what he would say. Porson would propose some unworthy pact, and her husband would repudiate it. She was glad to be before the stage of that drama.

Porson looked up at Marshall with one of his quick glances that, however much they shifted, seemed to gather whatever they needed in their course.

"How much you got in type now?" he asked.

Marshall laughed a little with that ironic note fitted to his scornful look.

"Mr. Porson," said he, "what have you come to ask?"

Porson straightened now, and gazed at him. To Janie, from her oblique vantage ground, he looked like a shambling old man. Marshall, confronting the direct beam of the small eyes, found it a holding power.

"The question's here," said Porson. He opened his mouth slightly, tightened the skin of his cheek and rubbed it with a forefinger, a trick Marshall knew in sundry farmers of his acquaintance. He saw at once that it was a characteristic gesture, and put it down in his mental notebook. "I took up your two first numbers," said Porson simply, "the first of the evening, and read 'em through. I thought I'd drop in before it went any further."

"Anything wrong with my facts?" asked Marshall incisively.

Porson seemed about to answer, but he drew himself back as if with a tardy recognition that this was a species of tribunal, and that he was not obliged to incriminate himself.

"Well," he said, with deliberation, "I don't know's I've got anything to say on that score. What I pitched upon——"

Marshall involuntarily glanced toward the inner room, and Janie, though she knew he could not see her, nodded at him in a community of delighted interest at Porson's way of expressing himself. They had both known he had a vocabulary of country phrases. He was confirming their cleverness with every word.

"What I pitched upon was this. You say towards the end of number two that later you'll go into particulars about the Blackstone Avenue land grab, and how

Porson's head clerk got ahead of him for once. Now I take it you make quite a handle of that?"

Marshall nodded, watching him.

"I go into it rather fully," he said.

"What article's it come in?"

"Number four."

"Well, Mr. Bruce," said Porson, looking him in the face, "I want you to cut that out."

Marshall laughed. Janie knew what he thought he had discovered. She, too, had hit upon it. Old Porson must have a very human foible at the bottom of his bag of tricks. He was not only a money king, avid of accumulation and the spread of his base regnancy; he was vain. He could not endure to have the world told that any man had got ahead of him.

"I should be much obliged," he was continuing, "if you'd tell me how you went into that."

"Delighted," said Marshall dryly. "I've got the article right here." He opened a drawer, and after a frowning search brought out several crumpled galleys of proof. These he whirled into order, and gave them to Porson, pointing out the significant paragraphs. Porson read slowly and painstakingly. Marshall, watching him, felt convinced that if these had been columns of figures, he could have run over them lightly with an accustomed ease; but even the plainest literature was dubitable ground.

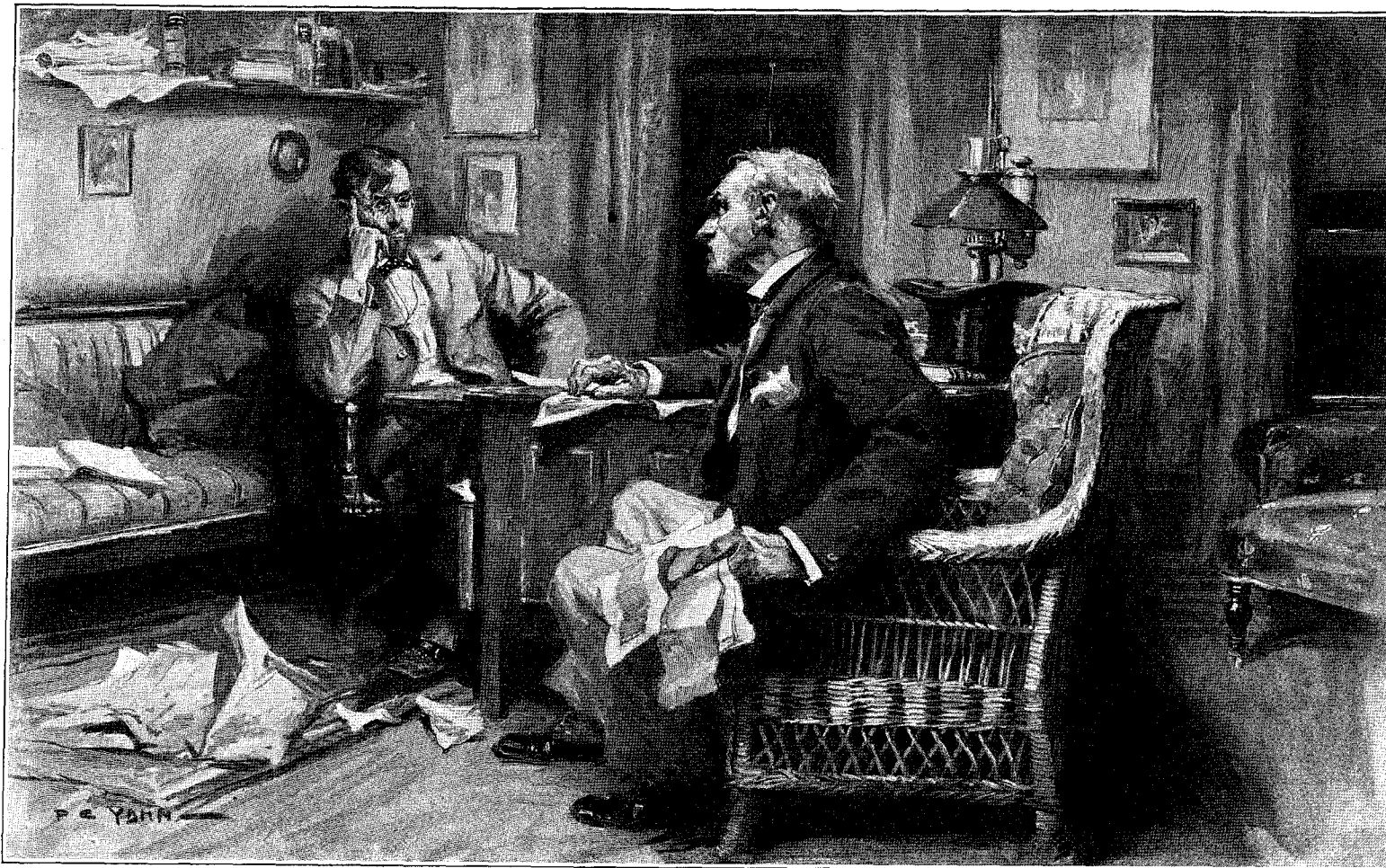
"Yes," he said at last. "Yes. I thought that's the way you'd fix it. Well, Mr. Bruce, you've got your facts pretty clear." Marshall nodded.

"Yes," he echoed. "I've got my data. You see, Mr. Porson, men in your occupation keep leaving documentary evidence behind them. There aren't any suppositions in these articles of mine. They're columns of cold facts. You've furnished the incidents yourself. I've only trailed along after you and picked 'em up."

But Porson did not seem to hear. He was considering, thinking out the best move to make. Finally he nodded slightly, as if in confirmation to himself, and sat up.

"Well," said he, "I guess I'll have to tell you the story of that deal."

Marshall smiled a little. The amended story would mean that Porson was explaining himself. That was an immense tri-



Drawn by F. C. Yohn.

"Tileston," said he, "was an honest man."—Page 184.

umph touching a man who, whatever the popular outcry, never answered. To explain meant to excuse himself, in a way to beg for milder verdicts. If a man had wrought that upon old Porson, he had done well.

Porson was drumming noiselessly now upon the desk, keeping time as he talked, and Marshall watched the knotted fingers. Janie, out of her cage, never turned her eyes from the old man's face.

"You say he"—Porson touched the bundle of disordered proof lightly with a species of disparagement not superb enough for scorn—"you say here my clerk, Luther Tileston, got ahead of me. You say he found out before I did that Blackstone Avenue was going through the old Dumping Fields, and he cut in ahead of me and bought up that land. Well, Mr. Marshall, you're wrong. I bought that land."

"Oh, no, you didn't," said Marshall, his mind on the trapping of vanity. "The deeds stood in his name. He made a fortune. His wife and daughter are living on it to-day."

"Yes," said Porson mildly, as if in tolerance of incomplete methods. "But I furnished the money. I bought in Tileston's name."

"What for?"

"It didn't do for me to go into it unless I did it some such way. I'd begun to be a marked man—" a slight assertiveness animated his voice. "If I'd gone into it in the light of day, there'd have been a hundred others ready to jump and pick up all the land near by. I wanted that, too, but I hadn't the means I have now. I wasn't prepared to take it till I knew whether they were going to extend the avenue to the river front and make the drive."

"The rest was sold later," said Marshall vaguely. He was not yet sensitized. "You did buy that. But Tileston bought the first lot. He got the Dumping Fields."

"Don't I tell you I bought in his name?" inquired Porson.

"Well," said Marshall, unwillingly convinced, "so you want me to make the correction?"

"I want you to drop the whole matter."

"Why?"

There was a long pause, and Janie, watching, saw Porson's face concentrate as if he were travelling a difficult way, bordered

by sadder or more serious things. Suddenly he came back.

"Tileston," said he, "was an honest man."

"Why, yes," Marshall returned, "nobody's ever known anything against Tileston. Except that land *coup*, of course. But I suppose he had a friend in the city council. I suppose he knew pretty well which way the boom was going, and it seemed to him venial to snap something up."

"He didn't have any friend in the city council," said Porson patiently. "I had the friend—more than one of 'em. I sent Tileston abroad on business at the time of that deal. He knew no more about it than the dead. And a week after he got home he died himself."

"So, if you bought for him, as you say you did, he never knew it?"

"No." A curious expression came over Porson's face and crumpled it into another sort of document. It bespoke remembrance of the uphill paths he had travelled to his gilded cell. "Tileston never knew anything about the matter. We had a kind of an unpleasantness at that time. He got hold of some things he didn't—understand." Janie, with a light vault into the saddle of intuition, thought he had been about to say, "stand for," and on that hint coursed along after him. "In regard to the business, that is. He meant to leave me. We talked that out a day or two before he died."

"What made you let the other matter rest? Wasn't it of a sort to be settled on the dot? You couldn't have meant to leave it that way, at loose ends. The avenue was voted on in less than a month."

Porson's mouth worked a little. "I did mean to clinch it," he said. "I put it off."

Instantly Janie felt she was running back over the difficult path, her mind with his, and she thought she saw exactly how it had been. Porson was younger then, less toughened to the world's assaults, and momentarily he had found himself unable to stand before the temperamental onslaught of Tileston's scorn. Marshall, too, had his conclusions.

"He would have repudiated it?" he put in irresistibly.

Porson did not seem to hear.

"I'd only to tell him and the transfer

would have been made," he averred. "Tileston was an honest man." And then, with no implication of the sequence, "He was no sort of a clerk for me. I shouldn't have taken him in the first place—but we were boys together."

"Then, when he died, the property stood in his name. You got left, so to speak.

"It stood in his name," said Porson briefly.

"Mr. Porson," said Marshall, "I wish you'd let me use this as an interview. It's magnificent copy."

"No," said Porson immovably, "I don't want you to use it and I don't want you to speak of the land. Tileston left a widow and a crippled daughter. That property appreciated."

"I should say it did!"

"They're living on it to-day. If they knew how it come—well, I don't feel sure what they'd do about it. I rather guess it wouldn't be safe."

"What makes you think so?"

"You see the widow come to me after Tileston's death. She was a kind of a high-spirited woman. Interested in charities. Wanted to reform the city government. Nice pleasant woman, too. Well, somebody'd got hold of her and told her Tileston was smart as a trap to fall in with the city government and pick up that land before the deal went through, and she come to me with tears in her eyes. Said her husband couldn't do a thing like that. If he could, she'd throw the money into the sea. Said she only hoped the firm had been doing it through him. Ready to sign it over to us. Seemed as if she couldn't do it soon enough."

"What did you say?" Marshall asked it breathlessly.

The ghost of a relaxation that might have served Porson for a smile, was wrinkling his lean face.

"I told her Tileston would have cut off his right hand before he'd have dickered with the city government."

"Did that convince her?"

"Oh, yes. She never liked me very well. Said she could trust me to tell her the worst, because if there was a chance of the property's comin' to the firm she knew I'd be eager and ready. Oh, no! She never liked me."

"And you think if she knew now——"

"I've watched that woman a good many years. She ain't the kind of a woman you care so very much about—" he made that slight motion of his toward the darkness where Janie sat, and she at least knew, with a cognizance purely feminine, that he was remembering her as something to be valued—"but you'd know she'd shell out in a second if she thought the money didn't come the straight road."

"You think she'd do it now?"

"I know she would."

"And she and the crippled daughter——"

"They'd go to the wall."

The two men sat for a minute or two in silence, Porson not even beating his impatient fingers upon the table. Janie, hearing her own hurried heart, hardly dared watch them now. When her husband spoke, hot tears came into her eyes. The tone was the one of infinite softness he was accustomed to use for her only.

"Now, you see I've mentioned the deal already. I can't take that back. I've got to speak of it again. How would it do if I should refer to it as one of those curious strokes of chance by which an honest man, not especially fitted for business, should have picked up some land nobody wanted—picked it up at the crucial moment just as the tide turned its way?"

"That's it," said Porson, with an evident relief. "But this—" he pointed to the proof which he evidently regarded with the deference of unaccustomed eyes, "this is printed."

"It hasn't gone into the magazine. I can arrange that. I can elaborate the stock transaction toward the close and cut this for space."

Porson picked up the proof and began reading the concluding paragraphs. Janie slipped out into the kitchen and Marshall heard running water through the filter. He watched Porson now with a softened, even an eager, curiosity. What would it mean to the man to read the record of this other transaction, perhaps the most disgraceful, and yet legally, the safest of his whole career. Porson laid the paper down, a veiled yet retrospective look upon his face.

"Have I——" Marshall hesitated—"Mr. Porson, do you challenge that?"

But Porson, taking his hat to go, looked merely inscrutable.

"I see you've put it in '71," he answered. "Yes, April, '71. I believe that's the right date."

Janie was flying into them with a tray, two glasses and a pitcher. Her eyes held points of light. She flushed all over her face, as if at some extraordinary event.

"I made you some lemonade, Mr. Porson," she said. "Won't you try it, please?"

The request was even urgent, as if Porson could do her the most distinct favor. He accepted a glass gravely, and drank without pause. Marshall, tasting, stopped and threw Janie a whimsical, terrified look, because she had left out the ice. Then he remembered that a part of their personal data was to the effect that Porson's unvarying beverage was unchilled lemonade, and smiled over the drink at Janie, who had scored.

Porson set down his glass.

"I'll bid you good evening," he said. He

was going out, veiled again in his poor inscrutability. But Janie dashed at him, in a warm impulsive hurry.

"Good-by, Mr. Porson," she said. "Won't you shake hands?"

He looked briefly surprised; the gnarled old hand enveloped hers, and again he said good-night. They heard the shambling, undignified tread lessening down the stairs. Then they looked at each other. There were tears in Janie's eyes, and Marshall frankly swore.

"He's made it over," she said tumultuously, "the world I saw to-night. It was dark with evil, and Porson's hung a light in it."

Marshall was looking toward the door, closed upon the meagre figure. His hand lay upon the proofs where he had put all that his clever mind had been able to gather concerning another man.

"So that," he said, in a curious tone, "is Porson. That's the man himself."